

Nyala, Sudan - Who would have thought that a genocide could become worse? But after two years of heartbreaking slaughter, rape and mayhem, the situation in Darfur is now spiraling downward.

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It's true that a few hundred thousand deaths in Darfur - a good guess of the toll so far - might not amount to much in a world where two million a year die of malaria. But there is something special about genocide. When humans deliberately wipe out others because of their tribe or skin color, when babies succumb not to diarrhea but to bayonets and bonfires, that is not just one more tragedy. It is a monstrosity that demands a response from other humans. We demean our own humanity, and that of the victims, when we avert our eyes.

Already, large swaths of Darfur are so unsafe that they are "no go" areas for humanitarian organizations - meaning that we don't know what horrors are occurring in those areas. But we have some clues.

There are widespread reports that the janjaweed, the government-backed Arab marauders who have been slaughtering members of several African tribes, sometimes find it convenient not to kill or expel every last African but to leave a few alive to grow vegetables and run markets. So they let some live in exchange for protection money or slave labor.

One Western aid worker in Darfur told me that she had visited an area controlled by janjaweed. In public, everyone insisted - meekly and fearfully - that everything was fine.

Then she spoke privately to two sisters, both of the Fur tribe. They said that the local Fur were being enslaved by the janjaweed, forced to work in the fields and even to pay protection money every month just to be allowed to live. The two sisters said that they were forced to cook for the janjaweed troops and to accept being raped by them.

Finally, they said, their terrified father had summoned the courage to beg the janjaweed commander to let his daughters go. That's when the commander beheaded the father in front of his daughters.

"They told me they just wanted to die," the aid worker remembered in frustration. "They're living like slaves, in complete and utter fear. And we can't do anything about it."

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[http://savedarfur.org/go.php?q=/misc/NY\\_Times\\_Kristof\\_column\\_Nov.\\_27.html](http://savedarfur.org/go.php?q=/misc/NY_Times_Kristof_column_Nov._27.html)